City of Alexandria Strategic Planning
Goal 1: There is Quality Development and Redevelopment, Support for Local Businesses, and a Strong, Diverse and Growing Local Economy

Public Comment

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Date: October 20, 2009
Comment: I wish to introduce two unlinked ideas into the Strategic Planning exercise.
a) Make Alexandria business friendly.
The reputation of the City as being friendly towards business is not exactly at a high point. Things have improved with some attempt at streamlining the permit procedure, but having worked with countless local authorities, I am amazed there is no office within City Hall devoted to looking after business.
I understand there was an Ombudsman in the City Manager's office but the post fell vacant and was never re-advertised.

In contrast to say twenty years ago when residents fought to limit business on every front, there is now, I think, a real awareness that a vibrant business area is good for the city.
A major issue is one of getting clear advice. This applies to simple matters such as getting a new sign to major projects such as new development. Often the City staff will not just say 'no'. They tweak, they alter, they cajole and they barter. All this costs money. With clear direction, businesses will know where they stand. And let the City get some exciting architecture.

Solution – make City Hall understand business and be business friendly – or at least friendlier.

b) Make ISPs build a modern internet system.
The backbone of all human activities is communication. The world is moving on and Alexandria should be at the cutting edge. I suspect the average downstream internet speed in Alexandria is about 550 kilobytes/sec. In the UK homes are being upgraded routinely to 20 mbs/sec. Work is going ahead on networks to the home to take the speeds up to500 gigabytes/sec. And these are telephone links, not satellite or cable. With such speeds and capacity a new world opens. The internet is on the cusp of 3D transmissions and so working at home with real office type interaction becomes possible. It is not just about the time it takes to down load a film but about a change in the way we work – and get to work.

To get to this Nirvana we need true competition and an IT astute local authority that can lean heavily on the providers to make the necessary investment in infrastructure and service.